



Realistic Information or Not! Short-Term Consequences of (Mis)Information

**Technical Course HFM 180 - Strategies to address
recruiting and retention issues**

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Outline

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- Realistic Job Previews (RJP)
- Theory & Research
- Amount of Information
- Choice of Recruitment Source
- Alternatives to RJP



Introduction

- Recruits who drop out of initial training or who are unhappy about their career circumstances have often been heard saying something like:
 - “I had a wrong idea of what the organization was really like”;
 - “I had not expected military life to be like that”;
 - “insufficient information was given to me to make a thought-out career choice”;
 - “if I had known beforehand that military training would be so hard, I would have never applied in the first place”.



Critical Decisions

- Critical decision that (military) organizations must make about their recruitment materials and practices involves the accuracy, or realism, of the information they provide.

Two Options

1. Focus on pre-hire attraction by emphasizing positive features and disregarding negative features. By portraying the organization in a favourable light, prospects are attracted to apply
2. focus on post-hire commitment (or job tenure) by providing complete and balanced information about the organization and the job, revealing both positive and negative features



RJP

- most well-known recruitment procedure pertaining to provision of information
- both favourable and unfavourable information is provided to applicants in order to reduce post-hire turnover
- While early RJP research (Weitz, 1956) lauded the potential usefulness of having potential employees' expectations as realistic as possible, subsequent studies have been contradictory.
- They vary from a significant reduction of turnover (Ilgen & Seely, 1974; Suszko & Breaugh, 1986) to little or no effect on turnover (Dean & Wanous, 1984; Reilly, Brown, Blood, & Malatesta, 1981)

RJP

- Most meta-analyses on RJP research (McEvoy & Cascio, 1985; Phillips, 1998; Premack & Wanous, 1985; Wanous, Poland, Premack, & Davis, 1992) suggest RJP's are effective in facilitating some positive organizational outcomes, especially when several variables are attended to (medium of RJP, timing of RJP, and research setting).
- The effect of RJP's on job turnover is also moderated to some extent by job complexity. Smaller reduction in turnover can be expected in low-complexity jobs than in high-complexity jobs (Cascio, 1998).
- Even when the effects of RJP's on post-hire outcomes (performance, turnover, job satisfaction) are relatively small, the economic savings in selection and turnover costs can be fairly large, since RJP's are relatively inexpensive to develop and to implement (Phillips, 1998).



RJP Effects on Turnover

- Screen out individuals whose needs are incompatible with the demands of the job or the culture of the organization (Wanous, 1973)
- Transmit an underlying message of trustworthiness, honesty and care (Schein, 1968; Wanous, 1977)
- Reduce dissatisfaction and turnover by improving a new employee's ability to cope with job demands. (Dugoni & Ilgen, 1981)

Realistic Information

Theoretical rationales for RJP effects

- Met Expectations (Porter & Steers, 1973), 'inoculation' or 'vaccination' hypothesis (Wanous, 1977)
- Most widely studied RJP theory
- Newcomers whose pre-hire expectations are met are more likely to remain on the job, while newcomers whose expectations are not met are likely to be dissatisfied with their job and eventually to leave it.
- RJP's reduce overly optimistic expectations to levels more consistent with actual work conditions



Realistic Information

- Self-selection (Wanous & Colella, 1989): RJPs screen out those whose needs are incompatible with the demands of job or organizational culture
- Trustworthiness, honesty, and care (Schein, 1968, Wanous, 1977): RJP transmits meta-message that leads to greater commitment
- Ability to cope, pre-rehearse (Dugoni & Ilgen, 1981), reduction of ambiguity (Horner et al., 1979)

Realistic Information

- **Empirical research on RJPs**
- Support for self-selection and honesty hypothesis
- Mixed support for coping hypothesis
- Substantial support in favor of met expectations hypothesis
- However, methodological problems (Irving & Meyer, 1994, 1995, 1999) similar to P-O fit research
 - Difference scores
 - Retrospective measures
 - Residual scores
 - Polynomial regression
- Overstatement of the role of met expectations

Amount of Information

- Several studies have examined the relationships between the amount of information provided in recruitment materials and job seekers' willingness to apply for the job described
- The results of these studies generally show that recruitment materials:
 - should be informative;
 - that they should address a range of job and organizational attributes; and
 - that they should provide specific information about those attributes
 - Barber (1988): possibility of informational overload
- Positive relationship between applicant attraction and the amount of information provided by the recruiter during the interview

Amount of Information

- **Insufficient information**
 - Signaling theory (Spence, 1973, 1974)
 - Indicators of goals, values, climate, culture, fairness, justice, type of job duties, HRM policy,... (e.g., Herriot, 1984; Iles & Robertson, 1999)
 - Accuracy - intentionality
 - Recruiter traits and behaviors
 - Warmth, competence, informativeness
 - Pre-screening and selection methods
 - Time delays



Choice of recruitment source

- **Theoretical rationales for source effects**
 - Realistic information hypothesis (Breaugh, 1981): Informal sources provide more accurate and specific information
 - Individual differences hypothesis (Schwab, 1982): Applicants drawn from alternative sources constitute samples from different applicant populations
 - Example: Advertisement aired only on daytime television vs. during heavy commuting hours
- **Empirical research on source effects**
 - Evidence for both hypotheses (Blau, 1990; Breaugh & Mann, 1984; Griffeth et al., 1997)



Alternatives to RJPs

Decision-Making Training (DMT)

- counteracts the criticism that pre-entry attraction decreases with the disclosure of drawbacks.
- training that teaches candidates how to identify and weigh positive and negative outcomes of a set of alternatives
- Transmits an essentially similar message of care and concern as that of RJP



Alternatives to RJPs

Expectation-Lowering Procedure (ELP) Buckley et al. (2002)

- The ELP consisted of information that emphasized the importance of appropriate expectations when entering any new job.
- Psychological contract and the high likelihood of developing unrealistic expectations
- Unrealistic expectations many times result in decreased organizational satisfaction, resulting in newcomers leaving the organization after a very short period

Conclusion

- positive relationship between unrealistic information and employee turnover, most popularly through unmet expectations
- RJP's tend to vary considerably depending on context, timing and method of presentation
- To address this, Breaugh and Starke (2000) suggested that RJP's should not be considered as a single event, but as a process of providing accurate information at several points during the recruitment process.

Practical Recommendations

- Do not think of RJP as a single event but as a process of providing accurate information at several points during the hiring process
- The communication method should be geared to the applicant population: use audio-visual and oral-interview RJP instead of written booklets and brochures
- Use testimonials from current job incumbents to transmit the message
- Present the RJP early in the hiring process



Practical Recommendations

- Try to uncover motivators or reasons that individuals have for joining the organization & update the information
- Examine employees' views & involve them in the update
- Use exit interviews and surveys to uncover the reasons why people leave
- Present the RJP early in the hiring process



- Maintain contact with applicants throughout the process
- Organize newcomer orientation programs to facilitate from civilian to military
- Use work samples, situational judgment tests, and assessment centers to inform applicants about their future jobs